

FRANK READE



WEEKLY MAGAZINE.

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second-Class Entry at N. Y. Post Office.

No. 82.

NEW YORK. MAY 20. 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

IN WHITE LATITUDES; OR FRANK READE, JR.'S TEN THOUSAND MILE FLIGHT. *By "NONAME."*



Barney at once started to climb up the huge skull. "Begorra," he cried, "let's see phat is up there."
"Go ahead, Barney," said Raynham; "I'll follow you." The Celt soon reached the cavity above the horns.



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IN WHITE LATITUDES;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

FRANK MAKES A DECISION.

"The land of perpetual winter, of constant ice and snow, where the cold is at times so intense that human life can hardly be supported, that is a field of exploration and research for which my soul craves!"

Paul Saint Onge, the distinguished French savant and traveler, who had summered and wintered in nearly every clime, made the above remarkable statement with all the earnestness of which he was capable.

At the moment he stood in the grand foyer of the Palmer House in Chicago, and the person to whom he addressed the above statement was a man younger in years, but fully as distinguished and well known.

Frank Reade, Jr., the young inventor, who hardly needs an introduction to the reader, listened with interest to Saint Onge.

"The problem of the North Pole has been a vexed one!" he agreed. "Yet, after all, of what consequence is it?

You will likely find little there but cold and snow and ice. What else?"

"Ah, not so, Monsieur Reade!" replied the distinguished traveler, confidently. "What would you say if it were proved that a fertile country existed there, and that a powerful race of people inhabited it?"

"I should say that a visionary theory had become a fact!" laughed Frank.

"Ah, monsieur, but I am serious!"

"Very well!" agreed the young inventor, "how can you account for the anomaly? A wild and fertile region in the center of all that awful region of ice and snow?"

Saint Onge rubbed his hands briskly.

"Ah, now monsieur gives me the opportunity. You will bear in mind, first, that beyond the 85th degree of north latitude there land ends, and there is found an open sea."

"Yes," agreed Frank, "so I believe the latest explorers have decided."

"Why is not the sea a frozen expanse just the same as that in Davis Straits or the Sounds? It is instead an open, tossing sea, from which the winds are quite temperate in comparison."

"There is something in that," agreed Frank.

"Ah! I am glad to see that monsieur is reasonable. Now beyond this sea—what is there?"

"Nothing to show that aught but this sea covers the entire region of the Pole!"

"Ah, not so! There must be land, there must be powerful agencies to so greatly moderate the temperature. What can these agencies be? What more reasonable than land—maybe a continent, and a volcanic one at that? Ah, monsieur, be sure, there is undiscovered land!"

The French savant's reasoning was logical and convincing. It deeply impressed Frank Reade, Jr.

"If I thought that——" he began.

"What?" asked St. Onge, eagerly.

"I have the means with which to visit that vicinity and forever settle the matter," said Frank, "with my airship 'Aurora.' I could sail north and south around the world."

The savant's figure trembled and his eyes glistened. He was plainly very much excited.

"Oh, monsieur," he declared, "you are the man to render this mighty benefit to the world and to science. Do not hesitate with your wonderful airship—you can do it. I beg one great favor, and that is the proud privilege of accompanying you. If there is great expense I will share it. If there is suffering or privation I will stand it. If it should mean death, I would gladly immolate my life upon this project. Oh, Monsieur Reade, there is no grander object, no worthier aim!"

Frank was for some moments deeply thoughtful. He finally lit a cigar, and said:

"St. Onge, you have interested me. I had thought of a trip to South Africa with my airship, but on my word, I am tempted to change my plans to conform with yours."

St. Onge was effusive.

"Ah, monsieur will never be sorry. It will be grand. He will do it."

"What is your address?" asked Frank.

"No. — Fifth Avenue," replied the savant. "Monsieur will let me know his decision by to-morrow?"

"I will," replied Frank, "but don't build anything upon this interview. I may be unable to accede to your plans."

"Monsieur need have no fears," replied the obsequious little Frenchman. "It will be all right. St. Onge is never disappointed. But he hopes."

With this the savant bowed himself out and left Frank alone. The young inventor sauntered into the main office of the hotel and for a time seemed oblivious of all about him.

Then he went up to his room.

He was stopping for a brief time at this hotel. His intention was to depart in a day or two for Readestown, whence he would start in his airship for some remote part of the world.

Thus far he had thought only of South Africa. But this meeting with St. Onge had thrown his mind into a new channel.

"On my word!" he mused, "that would not be so very bad a plan. The North Pole, eh? Of course, we would have to have furs—and——. I'll see what my two friends think of it!"

He touched a bell and then threw himself into an easy chair. In a moment a door of an adjoining room opened and a comical little Irishman stood on the threshold.

He ducked and scraped, and said:

"At yer sarvice, Misther Frank. Phwat kin I do fer yez, sor?"

"Where is Pomp?"

"The nagynr, sir? Shure, he is here wid meself."

Then by Barney's side there suddenly appeared the inkiest, stockiest little negro ever seen. His eyes danced and his ivories shone as he grinned and scraped, saying:

"I'se right heah, Marse Frank. Wha' yo' want ob me?"

"Come in, both of you," commanded Frank. "I want to talk with you!"

By way of explanation, it might be well to say that Barney and Pomp were faithful servitors of Frank Reade, Jr., and had accompanied him upon all of his famous trips the world over.

They were true as steel and ready to sacrifice their lives for their young master at any time.

When they were both in the room Frank said curtly:

"Sit down, both of you!"

Wonderingly they obeyed.

Then the young inventor proceeded to outline to them the North Pole project.

"We shall take our next trip of adventure to the white latitudes," declared Frank. "Now, I want both of you to take the first train to Readestown."

"A'right, sah!"

"Yis, sor!"

"Have stores placed aboard the Aurora, and get everything in readiness for a start at an early day. Do you understand?"

"Yis, sor!"

"Yo' kin bet we does!"

"Then be off lively!"

Pomp turned a flip-flap right there on the carpet, and Barney stood on his head. Then they vanished.

Frank drew a deep breath.

"We're in for it," he muttered. "Well, here's for success!"

With which he drew a pocket chart out and began studying it. For hours he was thus engrossed.

It was a late hour when he retired to rest. He slept soundly enough for a short space, but was early astir.

He descended to breakfast, after which he remembered his promise to St. Onge. He called a messenger boy.

To him he entrusted a message for No. — Fifth Avenue. In less than an hour St. Onge was on hand.

He was all eagerness and enthusiasm, and when Frank announced his intention of undertaking the trip to the white latitudes St. Onge was beside himself with joy.

"Ah, Monsieur Reade!" he cried. "You will never be sorry. It will be one grand triumph."

"I am not so sure of the latter," laughed Frank. "But as to the former, I am never sorry for any failure I make. I believe in taking such things philosophically."

The little Frenchman bowed.

"Monsieur is right," he declared.

"Now," continued Frank, "we have many things to consider. I have sent my men home to get the airship ready. They will leave nothing undone. But there are personal equipments which we might do well to procure here in Chicago."

"I shall be guided by monsieur."

"Very well. Now, firstly, have you got furs? You must remember that only furs can be warm in such a terrible climate as the Arctic."

"That is good, monsieur. I will get them at once!"

"And I must do the same. Let us go out to a furrier's at once and give an order for a number of suits."

A few moments later they were on the streets. Then they entered a furrier's.

It did not take long to select the suits needed, and the furrier promised to have them ready within three days' time. They would be sent to Readestown.

They carried their shopping tour further and purchased a great quantity of other needful things. All these were despatched to Readestown.

Back at the hotel once more, plans were more elaborately discussed. They dined together and thus spent the day.

It was late in the evening when St. Onge took his leave.

An hour later Frank received a telegram which read:

"Readestown, June 10, 18—"

"Mr. Frank Reade, Jr.: Airship is all in readiness and stores are all aboard. We await orders."

"BARNLY AND POMP."

"Good!" exclaimed the young inventor. "That is what I like. We shall soon be afloat and on our way to the Arctic."

His words were prophetic. It was not four days later that the Aurora, with her four passengers, sailed from Readestown upon her great mid-air trip.

Thousands of cheering people gathered to see the start and watch the airship until she became but a mere speck in the northern sky. The aerial voyagers were bound upon a thrilling and arduous quest.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN ON THE TRESTLE.

In the construction of the Aurora, Frank had followed out a plan which embodied—first, lightness; second, speed and steadiness; and thirdly, economy of space. All these things were of vital importance.

He had already mastered the art of ascension and consequent suspension, even in the face of high winds. All this was overcome by the propeller and four mighty rotascopes.

For motive power, of course, he had depended wholly upon electricity, for steam could hardly be regarded as practicable, on account of the heavy weight of water and fuel which it would be necessary to carry.

The Aurora was built of aluminum and thin steel, and upon the lines somewhat of an ocean greyhound, long and narrow of beam.

Everything possible was sacrificed to buoyancy, and in this respect she was largely a success. The cabins were two in number, and built above the deck. They were richly furnished, for Frank had spared no expense in appointments.

In the bow of the airship was a small tower, with plate-glass windows, which was used as the pilot house. Here was an electric keyboard, with push-buttons and levers, by means of which the entire mechanical parts of the airship could be operated.

The dynamos and engine-room were just below this in the forward hold. These were of delicate but powerful workmanship, and the storage system was a secret known only to Frank himself.

Over the pilot house there was a powerful searchlight, capable of throwing a light fully two miles. This was a valuable adjunct.

Four huge rotascopes furnished the power of ascension, and a large, four-bladed propeller that of propulsion.

Such was the airship *Aurora*, which Frank considered one of his greatest triumphs. And, indeed, it was no light honor to have been able to master the problem of aerial navigation.

The fact certainly entitled Frank to a great deal of credit. His was truly a wonderful brain.

Northward the course of the airship was set. At an altitude of possibly a mile Frank held the airship on her course.

Looking down from that dizzy height things upon the earth looked small indeed.

Houses and trees dwindled to mites, and human beings to atoms. St. Onge, the Frenchman, was carried away with the novel experience.

He spent most of his time at the airship's rail, studying the wonderful scene below, which unfolded to him a constant, ever-changing panorama.

Great cities and numerous towns were sighted; mighty rivers looked like ribbons of silver stretching across-country, and lakes were drops of molten metal on the landscape.

Suddenly there burst upon the view of all a mighty expanse of water.

"The ocean!" cried St. Onge. "Are you not on the wrong course, Monsieur Reade?"

"I think not," replied Frank, "for that is not the ocean."

"Ah! a part of it—a bay?"

"No; it is Lake Erie."

"Why, of course!" exclaimed St. Onge, somewhat crestfallen. "Why did I not think of that?"

In a short while the airship hung over the great lake. Plainly dozens of passing vessels could be seen upon its surface below.

But darkness was beginning to shut down rapidly, and the day's journey to come to an end.

Frank, however, had no idea of stopping the airship. With a man at the keyboard it could sail on at night as well as in the daytime.

The searchlight could show the course even on the darkest night. But just as the Canadian shore was looming up to view a gust of wind came from the northeast, which sent a spattering of rain across the deck.

"*Par Dieu!*" exclaimed St. Onge, "we shall have a storm. Monsieur Reade."

Frank glanced at the eastern sky critically.

"On my word, it does look a bit squally," he agreed. "I am sorry for that."

"Shall we travel with the same safety?" asked the Frenchman.

"I think so," replied Frank, "unless the squall becomes a hurricane. In that case——"

"Well?"

"We would have to go either up or down!"

"Up?"

"Certainly! If we ascend far enough we shall be above the storm. The upper strata of the atmosphere is very cold, and so rare as to be trying to the respiratory organs."

The savant nodded in comprehension and began to pace the deck, all the while watching the storm phenomena.

It was certainly an interesting spectacle, at least so long as daylight lasted, and even after the inky blackness shut down, for the electrical display was brilliant.

Frank put on speed and got clear of the lake, for he felt that it would be better to have dry land beneath them in case of a storm.

That the storm must overtake them was certain. Indeed, they were traveling to meet it as rapidly as they could.

The wind grew stronger and the air stinging cold.

It was necessary to don heavy overcoats to remain on deck. Far below were seen the twinkling lights of cities and towns.

Frank now lowered the airship to within a half mile of the earth, and the sights and sounds were much plainer.

The flashing lights of a railroad train could be seen dashing across the inky blackness of the country. Then came the first premonition of a storm.

A dull, distant roaring came over the hills and through the valleys. The airship began to pitch and rock violently.

It soon became evident to Frank that the *Aurora* could not hold her head against such a blast, so he sprang into the pilot house.

Barney was at the keyboard.

"Phwat do yez say, Mither Frank?" cried the Celt. "Shure, we're blowing back to the lake, sor!"

"Send her down!" cried the young inventor. "Drop her into that depression in the hills."

"All roight, sor!"

The airship sank like a huge bird down into the valley. High hills were on every hand.

In this depression the force of the wind was broken, and anchors were thrown out so that the airship rested all secure.

But how the storm howled.

For fully an hour the hurricane pelted across the hill-tops. Then it abated and the rain began to fall.

Up to this point the voyagers had been kept exceedingly busy seeing that the anchor ropes were secure. Now, however, this was not necessary, and all repaired to the cabin for a respite.

Pomp soon had an appetizing repast spread of which all partook, for they were exceedingly hungry.

"By St. Denis!" cried St. Onge. "I never saw a harder wind in any part of the world. Ugh! it is lucky that we found this sheltered spot!"

"You are right," agreed Frank. "It was our best course."

"Beggorra, the storm ain't over yit, be any means!" declared Barney.

"True!" agreed St. Onge, "but I think its fury is spent."

"Yes," affirmed Frank, "we need fear no more from the wind."

"Am we going on to-night, Marse Frank?" asked Pomp.

"No," replied the young inventor. "I think it is safest and best to remain here for the break of day. We are not so badly off!"

"Where do you reckon we are, monsieur," asked St. Onge.

"Some wild spot among the hills," declared Frank. "Turn on the searchlight, Barney, and let us see where we are."

"All roight, sor!"

The Celt sprung to the light and the next moment its rays were traversing the mountain sides. No sign of human habitation was visible there.

But as the Celt flashed the rays down into the lower gorge he gave a great cry.

"Shure, Misther Frank!" he cried, "there is a railroad track!"

"A railroad?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yis, sor!"

Sure enough, all were able to see the tracks as they wound through the gorge and passed over a high trestle. At the same moment St. Onge exclaimed:

"Mon Dieu! do you see nothing else? Is there not an obstruction on that trestle? Something across the rails?"

In a moment all were excited. There was certainly a black object lying across the rails.

What did it mean?

This was a problem.

Was it a plan to wreck a passing train? Thoughts of train robbers and desperadoes crossed the minds of all.

Frank Reade, Jr., was the first to act.

"Barney, get your rifle, and mine," he ordered, peremptorily. "Pomp, keep guard on board here, and look out

for danger. I mean to go out onto that trestle. Would you like to go, too, Monsieur St. Onge?"

"With pleasure, Monsieur Reade!" cried the savant. "I will take my rifle also."

"Yes, it is well to go armed. There is some hocus-pocus about this matter, I believe."

Barney was instantly on hand with the weapons, and thus well equipped the three men left the airship. They scrambled down a high bank and were quickly on the railroad track.

Pomp had focused the searchlight upon the trestle so that all was as plain as day.

They quickly made their way to the end of the trestle, and as they reached this point they beheld a thrilling sight.

The dark object on the rails was seen to be a human body; then it was seen that ropes bound it to the iron rails.

Even as they looked it moved a trifle, and a white, agonized face was turned toward them.

"For the love of God, save me!" came a husky appeal. "I have been brought here by fiends and doomed to die beneath the wheels of the express which is due here very soon now. Oh, my God! do you hear that?"

It was a distant shrill whistle. For a moment the three aerial voyagers were frozen with horror.

Then Frank cried:

"Quick, boys! Cut his bonds! There is no time to lose! A human life is at stake!"

Barney was the first upon the trestle. But a sharp, whip-like report rang out, and the Celt sank down in a heap.

CHAPTER III.

AT JAMES BAY.

For one instant Frank and St. Onge hesitated. They saw by the flash that the shot had come from the opposite side of the ravine.

Crack-ack!

Bullets whistled by Frank's head.

"Down, St. Onge!" he cried. "Down, on your life!"

Just in the nick of time Frank and the savant sank down behind the embankment. They were not a moment too soon.

Bullets tore up the sand about them. It was evident that the assassins were bound to defeat a rescue.

"My soul," gasped Frank. "Barney is killed!"

"Divil a bit, sor," came a shrewd whisper from the Celt.

"that bullet sthruck me in the leg, sor, but it only cut the muscle, sor, an' it's all roight I am!"

"Good," cried both men, joyously.

"Shure, I'm not fool enough to git up jist yet, sor, an' risk another shot. Shure, I'd better stay here!"

"Right," returned Frank. "And I have a plan. The enemy are in that thicket on the other side. I don't know how many of them there are, but we'll find out."

"Yes, sor."

"Now, you stay where you are, and to divert their attention we'll creep up this side of the gorge and open fire. While they are attending to us, they will think you dead, and then you can take advantage of that fact to creep up and cut that poor devil's bonds. See?"

"Shure, I do, sor!" cried Barney, readily. "I'll do phwat yez say, sor."

"Come on, St. Onge."

The two men crept along the side of the ravine. Then they opened fire from a point fifty yards farther down.

The ruse worked.

The villains probably thought that the rescuers were trying to cross the ravine to attack them and began to open fire hotly.

Meanwhile, Pomp, on board the airship, had watched the scene with interest. When he saw Frank's move he took the cue and moved the focus of the searchlight from the trestle to the thicket where the assassins were.

The focus blinded them and 'as the trestle was now in darkness Barney was instantly upon his feet.

At that moment a whistle came up the gorge and a headlight swung into view.

"Mither of Moses!" gasped the Celt, "it's small chance now!"

But the Celt was not the one to dodge an issue. He made a leap forward and reached the unfortunate man.

He whipped out his knife and slashed at the cords. Below, a distance of forty feet, were the sluggish waters of a stream.

Barney had just time to roll the rescued man over the trestle and follow himself. They fell with a tremendous splash into the waters below.

Overhead thundered the express. There had not been a second to spare.

It was a narrow escape.

Fortunately the water in the stream was not deep and Barney got his charge, who seemed benumbed, ashore.

Then he dragged him into a thicket, saying:

"Shure, can't yez walk?"

"I think so, as soon as I get the cramp out of my legs."

replied the unknown. "May God forever bless you! You have saved my life!"

"I'm glad of that, sor; but shure we'd better get back to the airship, sor.——"

"Airship?"

"Yes, sor."

"What do you mean?"

"I have no time to explain to yez, now, sor, but yez must come along loively."

Without another word the rescued man limped away after the excited Celt. Already the fusillade across the gorge was growing hotter.

Up the side of the ravine through the scrub growth they climbed. Soon they were upon the railroad track and in sight of the airship.

Barney whistled a signal which Frank heard and understood. A few moments later all met at the rail of the airship.

Not a word was said by the stranger, who scrambled aboard with the rest. The rain was falling and all were drenched.

"Whurroo!" cried Barney, as they entered the cabin. "Shure, we bate the omadhouns, bad cess to thin. And it was a foine job, too!"

Then all eyes were turned upon the stranger.

He stood revealed in the cabin light as a man of medium height, with a patrician cast of features, slight side whiskers of gray and gray hair. He was a man of possibly sixty years of age.

He was well dressed, though his garments were now soaking wet. He was evidently a man of the capitalist or banker class.

For a moment he stood silently before them. Then he said:

"Gentlemen, you have performed a humane deed to-night. You have saved a human life. For that I thank you, which is the best reward I have. I know that you want an explanation.

"My name is Theodore Dwight, and I am a citizen of Toronto. I am a man of property and president of the 'Queens Banking Co.' Several nights ago I was in my office looking over important papers, when three men burst suddenly in upon me. They were masked and armed. I was overpowered, gagged, bound and blindfolded.

"Then they opened the bank safe and took out money and papers of great value. One of them wrote a letter which he read to me, as a confession that I had absconded with the bank's capital. This was left on the desk.

"Then I was carried out bodily, placed in a covered wagon and carried for days over rough roads to this spot.

"Evidently they found me an annoyance and suddenly decided to get rid of me in the manner you have seen. Thanks to your merciful interposition I yet live."

Frank and his companions exchanged glances. Then the young inventor extended his hand.

"Mr. Dwight, I am glad that we arrived just in the nick of time. Let us introduce ourselves. I am Frank Reade, Jr., the owner of this airship. This is Monsieur St. Onge, of the Royal French Academy of Sciences. These are Barney and Pomp. You are welcome on board the Aurora, and I shall see that you are put in a safe way to return to your home."

"You speak of an airship," said Dwight, in a puzzled way.

"Right," said Frank, politely. "You are on board one now."

"Well, I must say it is a surprise," declared the Toronto banker. "From what I can see it is a palace."

"You shall see," said Frank. "But first let me furnish you with dry clothing and a few creature comforts."

In a very short space of time Dwight was wholly at home aboard the Aurora. He was delighted with the wonderful airship.

"Indeed!" he declared, "I am only sorry that I am not one of your party to the North Pole. I wish you unbounded success."

"Thank you," replied Frank.

Whatever became of the bank robbers was never known. They did not venture to attack the airship again, and the night passed without further incident.

The storm cleared away at daybreak and the airship went aloft. Frank carried President Dwight to the nearest railway station, where he obtained a train to Toronto.

So ended the first thrilling incident of the trip. In a few hours the airship was sailing northward over British territory.

Frank headed directly across Georgiana Bay for Rupert Land and the southern shores of James Bay.

After crossing Georgiana Bay the real wilderness of the Northwest began to unfold itself.

Mighty forests extended as far as the eye could reach, thickly populated with game of all kinds.

Occasionally there were to be seen the rude camps and dwellings of trappers and fur hunters, but beyond these no sign of human life was visible.

For two long days and nights the airship sailed over this great wilderness.

The air became raw and chill, and it was soon necessary to don warmer garments.

"We are nearing the white latitude," declared Frank. "Do you not already feel the chill of ice and snow?"

"Indeed that is true," agreed St. Onge; "fur will soon be in order."

Then a few hours later the water of James Bay burst into view. As the shores of this southern point of the great Hudson's Bay burst into view it was seen that a rude fort or block-house was situated upon a promontory below.

But not a sign of a human being was about.

This was indeed strange.

Frank had at first no idea of stopping until the airship was amongst the ice. But something about this deserted frontier fort excited his curiosity.

"On my word!" he declared, "I've half a mind to explore that old place. What say you, St. Onge?"

"Do, by all means, monsieur!" declared the French savant.

"Phwat's the order, sor?" cried Barney, who had been listening.

"Make a landing!" said Frank.

Barney was not loth to comply. They had been in the air now for a long while, and he was quite willing to once more set foot on land.

So down settled the airship like a huge bird and a few moments later touched the ground not twenty yards from the deserted fort.

The electric machinery stopped its buzzing and the rotascopes ceased to revolve. Barney threw out the anchors and then every one of the voyagers went over the rail.

It seemed indeed good to set foot once more on terra firma. The motion of the airship made the ground seem to heave a trifle, but soon all got used to that.

Frank led the way along the edge of the promontory toward the block-house. It was a structure of logs, with loopholes, and a dismantled stockade half surrounded it.

It was plainly not tenanted now, but that it had been recently was seen by a number of half-visible footprints in the soft soil of the yard. Frank led the way to the door, when St. Onge called his attention to an object on the beach below.

It was a dilapidated ship's long boat, pulled high up on the sand. A ragged sail clung to a slender mast. It was an unusual spectacle in this part of the world. Frank, however, did not stop just now to investigate this matter, but entered the main room of the block-house.

Here he was destined to find that which was bound to influence the entire trip to the Arctic.

CHAPTER IV.

A THRILLING STORY.

The main room of the block-house contained no furnishings save a rude table of boards and some coarsely constructed benches.

There was a tremendous broad hearth where many a cheery fire had blazed. It was easy to imagine the legion of hunters and trappers who had gathered about the cheery blaze in days gone by.

For this deserted block-house had no doubt once been a rendezvous for the Hudson Bay Company's fur hunters. Here they came for their supplies and the pay for their skins.

For what reason the post had been discontinued it was not easy to say. But such was the case.

As our voyagers entered the place, they were deeply impressed. They knew that in these rude walls there had gathered the hardest, most adventurous class of men on earth.

But Frank's quick eye caught something white on the table. It was a piece of canvas tacked down upon the boards securely. Upon it, traced with a curious red stain which looked like blood, was the following startling message:

"To all visitors here: Know by this that John Kelley and Sam Sprague, survivors of the wreck of the Ethel May, here landed and made their home for many weeks. With which there is a story.

"Twelve months ago the Ethel May, Captain Carlos Clyde, with thirty men in crew and the captain's daughter, Ethel, aboard, was cruising for whales in Davis Strait. From there we worked our way through Hudson's Strait into Fox Channel, when one dark night a storm descended upon us and we were nipped in the ice.

"All efforts were of no avail to extricate the Ethel May, and we were obliged to seek refuge upon a small island. There we removed stores from the ship, and with some of her lumber constructed a cabin.

"Six of our men fell sick and died. Then more deserted one night, and we never saw them again. Whether they succeeded in reaching civilization or not we do not know.

"This left fourteen of us on the isle. Of course, with so many mouths to feed the stores began to grow less. It was plain that something must be done, or we must all perish in the ice.

"But we lived in hopes of the ship getting free when the ice pack should break up. But alas! the pressure proved too great, and when the pack broke up she went to the bottom. This was a bitter disappointment.

"After this the men began to drop one by one. Six more died of scurvy, and four deserted. This left only myself (John Kelley), Sam Sprague, Captain Clyde, the pursuer, Harris Raynham, and Ethel Clyde, the captain's daughter.

"We planned one day to take the long-boat and strike southward through Hudson's Bay, hoping to reach a settlement. But when all was in readiness, the captain broke his leg and could not be moved from his couch. As it meant another winter on the isle if the start was not made at once, it was decided that Sprague and myself should set out in the long-boat to reach civilization and get succor the best way we could. Young Harris Raynham, who was in love with Ethel, was to remain with the captain and his daughter until we could return with aid.

"It would take a volume to tell of our thrilling experiences in reaching this spot. But we have succeeded and to-day we start for civilization and for succor. God grant we may find it.

"Should this meet the eye of any noble-hearted man, if it is within his power, we would beg of him to carry succor to the castaways in Fox Channel, should we fail to get through the wilderness alive.

(Signed) "JOHN KELLEY, 1st mate.

"SAM SPRAGUE, his X mark."

Frank read this surprising chronicle aloud, while the others listened with interest. It was truly a most remarkable narrative.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed St. Onge, "that is like a story book!"

"Beggorra, it bates the Arabian Nights," declared Barney.

"Or Uncle Tom's Cabin, sah," asserted Pomp, whereat Barney glowered at the coon savagely.

"Shure, there's no comparison in that," he cried.

"Jes' as much, sah, as in wha' yo' said," protested Pomp.

But Frank and St. Onge were discussing the matter seriously.

"Do you think those three people are yet on that isle, Monsieur Reade?" said St. Onge.

"Without doubt," replied Frank.

"Then we would be without charity to refuse to aid them."

"You are right," agreed the young inventor, "and we will

certainly make a search for them. They are directly in our path to the Pole."

Further search of the fort resulted in no other discovery of interest. The voyagers returned to the airship.

The cold day was drawing to its close. The tossing, inhospitable waters of Hudson Bay stretched an unseen distance to the northward.

It was really a wonderful thing to reflect upon that these two hardy seamen had traveled that interminable distance in tempestuous seas in the small boat, with only scant food and little water. It was truly a heroic accomplishment.

While all this time upon that dreary, ice-bound isle in Fox Channel the three castaways, if yet alive, were waiting with hope long deferred.

"We will start at once," declared Frank. "Put on all speed, Barney! We must not be too late."

The Celt needed no urging.

He sprang into the pilot-house and set the rotascopes in motion. Up leaped the ship.

Up she went for a thousand feet. Then Barney set his course due north.

A chill wind was blowing and the night bade fair to be extremely dark. There were a few snowflakes in the air.

But this was no barrier to travel. The searchlight's rays made a pathway far ahead, and from the pilot house any obstruction could easily be seen.

But there was little danger of striking an obstruction at that altitude, and sailing over the raging waters of the stormy bay.

For some while the voyagers remained in the pilot-house watching the great waste of waves below. Then Pomp scurried away to prepare supper for the party.

This was soon served steaming hot and the voyagers did ample justice to it. Barney was able to leave the keyboard long enough for this.

But the one topic of discussion was the wreck of the Ethel May. All sorts of theories were advanced.

St. Onge was inclined to take a gloomy view of the outlook. He fancied that the three castaways would be dead ere they could reach them.

"It looks to me, monsieur," he said, convincingly, "as if the young man has a large task upon his hands to care for those in his charge. If he is spared his health and strength possibly he may do it. But if not—what can the crippled captain or his daughter do?"

"That is true," agreed Frank, "but we will believe that Harris Raynham is a young man of resource and of staying qualities. He will hunt and fish and keep plenty of

stores on hand. Perhaps the captain's leg has set by this time and he is all right again."

But St. Onge was dubious.

"I know the rigor of the clime," he said; "there are so many forms of climatic sickness to assail one."

Thus the evening was passed. Barney was relieved by Pomp a little past midnight.

When daylight came again they could see nothing but water on all sides. They were far out over the stormy expanse of Hudson Bay.

The distance to Fox Channel was mighty, and again it was wondered how the two daring sailors had ever accomplished it in the long-boat.

The morning was keen and bright. The threatening storm had lifted for a time—and an unusual thing for those latitudes—the sun shone clearly.

Suddenly Barney called Frank's attention to land dead ahead.

"That is all right," declared Frank. "It is the Island of Agoomsha. We are not yet out into the main part of Hudson Bay. This arm is called James Bay."

"An island, sor!" exclaimed Barney. "Shure enough, here it is on the chart. And there are others."

"Yes," replied Frank. "They lie to the eastward. They will give us no trouble. Just keep her due north."

Agoomsha Island was a wild and rugged region. Great flocks of ducks and wild geese rendezvoused in its deep fords and lagoons.

But no sign of human life was seen, though it was known that roving bands of Indians often visited the place in their kayaks or canoes to collect the eggs of the wild fowl.

The long reefs were alive with seal and walrus. All this was evidence that they were rapidly approaching the Arctic region.

Beyond Agoomsha the airship kept in nearer the western shore until a great promontory was sighted, which the chart gave as Cape Henrietta Maria.

They were now in Hudson Bay proper, and for many days the airship held its course northward over the tossing sea.

Icebergs and fields became common, and the air was now so chill that the voyagers thought best to don their furs. Every hour now brought them nearer to Fox Channel.

And naturally the suspense was high. Barney crowded on all speed.

And one day he sighted land again, dead ahead.

"Mansfield Island," declared Frank. "That is Hudson Strait to the eastward."

"I see nothing but icefields, Mr. Reade," declared St. Onge.

"The winter is near at hand, and the straits are closing up," said Frank. "The channel is not always open. But two weeks ago a ship could easily have sailed around the northern point of Labrador and into Hudson Bay."

The airship drew rapidly nearer Mansfield Island, and suddenly Barney gave a great shout.

"Misther Frank," he cried, wildly, "there's some one on that island!"

And all on the airship's deck, saw in confirmation of this, a white flag nailed to a pole on a high cliff.

CHAPTER V.

SNOWBOUND.

It was certainly a signal for relief, and showed plainly that upon the isle were those needing succor. But this was not the isle where the Ethel May's people were waiting for help.

Frank was sure of this. But he could not deny the fact that somebody was upon Mansfield Island.

Who could they be?

This was a question.

"More castaways!" exclaimed St. Onge. "I tell you, Monsieur Reade, we can play good Samaritan to advantage now."

"You are right," agreed Frank, "but we cannot refuse."

"Certainly not."

"Even if we accomplish nothing more on this trip, the time cannot be considered as lost."

"By no means."

The airship settled down toward the island. And now drawn up on the sandy beach there was seen a ship's yawl, stove and useless. Back from the beach and under the cliff was a rude habitation of fir boughs and rock slabs. But not a human being was in sight.

This was odd.

Where were they?

The voyagers exchanged glances. But Frank was not long in explaining.

"They may be in the interior of the island, hunting," he said. "Perhaps somebody is in the hut. We will soon find out."

"Shall we land on the beach, or?" asked Barney.

"Yes; well back from the cliff," said Frank. "Steady, there!"

The Aurora settled down upon the sands lightly. Then Frank made a funnel of his hands and shouted:

"Hello, the hut!"

No response.

"Hello!"

All was silence.

Without further words the voyagers sprang over the rail and approached the rude habitation. Then it was seen that it had been long since living beings had crossed its threshold.

Several mounds in the sand, with upright slabs of stone, partly told the tragic story.

But the scene which met the gaze of the voyagers in the hut was fearful. There, partly rolled in skin robes, were three skeletons.

That was all.

There were a few implements of ship's stores lying about. The cinders and ashes of a long-extinct fire were in the center of the hut.

Three rusted rifles leaned against the wall. Frank picked up one of these, and on the butt he saw engraved:

THOMAS STOWE! Ship Ethel May!

He handed it silently to St. Onge. It was easy to understand all.

These death-stricken castaways were a part of the deserting crew mentioned by Kelley and Sprague. They had made a daring attempt to reach civilization.

But the stormy sea had crushed their boat, and cast away on this isle they had died of starvation and disease.

It was a fearful scene and made those who witnessed it faint and sick at heart.

"May Heaven rest their souls!" said St. Onge. "How they must have suffered."

There was nothing to be done but to return to the airship.

This was done and the Aurora was quickly aloft once more. One thing had been settled, and that was that Kelley's graphic account was truthful.

Straight up the Fox Channel the airship now held its course.

As no longitude or latitude had been given by Kelley, the voyagers had nothing to guide them but the fact that the three castaways were upon an isle in the Fox Channel.

Several islands were sighted, but none of them bore sign of human occupancy. The airship sailed a somewhat irregular course in order to make the search thorough.

This matter went for some days and it had begun to

look like an impossibility to find the missing isle, when a heavy snowstorm set in from the northeast, and for a time the airship was in a fleecy cloud.

Snow quickly drifted upon the decks and no object could be seen ahead, so Frank checked the engines. The situation rapidly became an unpleasant one.

For the rotascopes clogged and worked with difficulty, as did the propeller.

Frank would have made a landing at once had there been land beneath.

Howling and sifting, cold and cutting was the storm. The searchlight was utterly inadequate to pierce that white cloud.

It would not do to stop the rotascopes or the propeller entirely, for then they must have fallen into the sea. But the strain upon them was tremendous.

Frank studied the barometer and said, finally:

"This storm has come to stay with us for some while. The best thing we can do is to get in somewhere out of it."

"Ah, Monsieur Reade, that is true," agreed St. Onge, "but where shall that be?"

"That is the problem," declared Frank. "If it was not so far to the land east or west I'd make for it and camp until after this storm."

"Why not light upon a berg or some floating ice-pack?" suggested the French savant. "It is a good substitute, and what little we drift out of our course we can make up after the storm."

"Good!" cried Frank. "Your suggestion is capital. And as I live I believe we are over an ice-pack now. Descend, Barney, and let us find some sort of a resting place."

"All roight, sor!"

Down settled the airship, and in a few moments a white surface was seen below. A great height of glittering white rose upon one hand.

That it was either an iceberg or floating pack Frank felt sure. It would be a drifting isle, but anything was better than facing that awful storm at such an altitude.

So the Aurora descended and rested upon the white plain. The jagged peaks about seemed naught else but the pinnacles and crags of an iceberg.

Under their cover, however, the fury of the storm was greatly lessened. So the voyagers felt secure, and Frank was much relieved.

"To-morrow," he said, "or after the storm abates, we will be able to make up for any loss of distance by drifting."

"Shure, sor," cried Barney, "I'm afther thinkin' that be that toime it's buried in snow we'll be!"

"It is a transient substance," said Frank, "such a contingency would not be so very alarming!"

"Whurroo!" ejaculated the Celt. "Plawat the divil was that?"

Every man sprang to his feet. The sound which came to their ears was a savage roaring, like that of wild beasts.

And such, indeed, it was. As they followed the searchlight's glare they saw a huge white bear just clambering down the icy heights.

He was followed by another and another. Half a dozen of them came shambling toward the airship.

In the gloom they looked formidable, indeed, and for a moment St. Onge was in terror. But Frank reassured him.

"They can do us no harm!" he declared. "As soon as they find that out they will go away."

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the little Frenchman. "I am not so sure of that. Are you certain that they will not break in our windows, Monsieur Reade?"

"Very sure," replied Frank. "You need have no fear. Are they not magnificent fellows?"

And indeed they were monster specimens of their kind. They placed their huge jaws against the grated windows and glared in at the voyagers. But they could do no further harm.

Nor were they unaccompanied. A distant mournful wail was heard, followed by another and another.

Soon a chorus of howls made the night hideous. Then the white snow surface became black with the legion of Arctic wolves which came snapping about.

Frank was astounded.

"How is this?" he exclaimed to St. Onge. "Where did all these animals come from?"

"Indeed, monsieur, I cannot say," replied the savant.

"They cannot find a living on this ice-pack. We must be contiguous to or in connection with the shore."

"Monsieur is right," agreed St. Onge. "I see no better explanation."

"And yet," said Frank, "it is one hundred miles to land in either direction. How could they have traveled all that distance over ice-fields, which are continually breaking up?"

St. Onge could only stare. He saw the point and its incongruity. Truly here was a problem.

Where had the wolves come from? It was easy enough to account for the bears, for nearly every iceberg carried them. But the wolves?

They never ventured out on the ice-pack, as was well known, yet here was a legion of them in full cry.

Frank was plunged in deep thought. When at length a solution of the mystery came to him he was amazed.

"Well, I'm fuddled," he exclaimed. "Why didn't I think of that before?"

"Eh?" exclaimed St. Onge.

"Why, of course. It is likely that we have, by chance, alighted upon some big island. Perhaps it is the very island we are looking for!"

This was a revelation.

And now the voyagers gazed out upon the white peaks and crags, it was seen that they looked less and less like an iceberg. There was no disputing the fact.

They were upon an island.

Of course, interest was now at fever heat. There was little sleep for all that night.

And when morning came the storm did not at once abate. Barney, who was on guard, made an effort to look out of the pilot-house window.

He had but a narrow space to see through, for the snow on a level was far above the lower panes of the window. It nearly covered the airship.

Tons of the solid stuff weighed upon the decks of the airship and fairly made her creak and groan. Had the storm continued a few hours longer the airship must have been completely buried.

But it did not. It suddenly cleared with a stiff gale from the northwest.

This helped to clear away some of the snow and blew great drifts everywhere, but for all this the Aurora was anchored—buried in the snow!

CHAPTER VI.

FOUND AT LAST.

The situation was by no means a pleasant one to contemplate.

The airship could not hope to rise with all that weight of snow on its deck anchoring it. All the while the cold was growing more bitter.

Frank was astonished at the outlook.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "Who would have thought this? We seem to be in a bad scrape!"

"Unless we can shovel away the snow, monsieur," declared St. Onge.

"That will be a heap of work," declared Frank, "but the sooner we accomplish it the better. If it freezes then we shall find it difficult."

Barney opened the deck door and dug a tunnel out across the deck. Then work was begun on the snow.

Long before it was half removed the voyagers thought they had undertaken a tremendous contract. And, indeed, this was literally true.

But all kept at work diligently and by noon had cleared the entire forward part of the ship. Then work was begun on the after part.

The sun had now appeared and the voyagers were able to see something of their surroundings.

And Frank's theory was at once verified. Wooded slopes were beyond the cliff line to the northward. They were upon an island.

With daybreak the wolves and bears had disappeared. To the southward lay strips of open sea, and great irregular lines of ice.

It was hours past noon ere the last vestige of snow had been removed from the airship's deck.

Then the rotascope valves were cleaned and the airship was once more ready for an ascent.

Barney sent her aloft. As soon as she reached the upper atmosphere the complete outline of the island was seen.

It was fully thirty miles in length and ten in breadth. It was partly wooded with high cliffs and many irregular bays and harbors.

But what caught the gaze of all and gave them a thrill was a cloud of smoke rising above one of the cliffs on the eastern side of the island.

This was a certain sign of the presence of human beings, and Frank and St. Onge gripped hands.

"We have found them!"

"It looks like it."

The airship sailed over to where the smoke was. Then, at the base of the cliff, the hut of the castaways was seen.

There was no person in sight, nor did any one appear as the airship settled down in the snow, not twenty yards from the hut. Frank and St. Onge sprang over the rail.

In a moment they had reached the door of the hut and pushed it open.

A fire burned upon the earthen floor. There was a rude bench and a ship's table. Other articles of ship's furniture were beyond.

At one end of the room there was a long bench against the wall. Upon this half reclined the slender figure of a young girl. Her eyes were swollen with tears, and her manner was distraught.

She started up as the newcomers entered, and at sight of them a wild scream pealed from her lips.

"Oh, Harris, at last!" she cried. "We are saved—saved! They have come to take us home!"

There was a small, inner room at the other end of the cabin. From this there sprang forth a man.

He was young—a mere stripling—with thin frame from long privation, and haggard, drawn, yet handsome face. He stood for a moment transfixed.

Then he recovered and took a step forward. His eyes burned like live coals in his head as he said huskily:

"You—were sent here for us? You are from Kelley and Sprague?"

"Yes, indirectly," replied Frank, warmly. "Cheer up, good people, you are certain to leave this place forever. I will see to that."

"Heaven be praised!" cried the youth, completely overcome. "Oh, Ethel, we are saved!"

It was an exciting and impressive moment for all. It was true that these young people had given up all hope of ever leaving this region alive.

"But there was another in your party?" asked Frank: "Captain Clyde——"

"Hush!" whispered young Raynham, as he indicated the sobbing girl.

Then he moved toward the door of the inner room.

"Come this way!"

They passed the threshold, and upon a rude couch Frank saw a still, rigid form, covered with a rude tarpaulin.

"The captain?" he whispered.

"Yes," replied Raynham. "He died yesterday, and we were to bury him to-day in the ice. Oh, there have been some sad scenes enacted in this place!"

"You must both come aboard the airship at once!" said Frank. "I can see that you are worn out with the privation and the strain. Your father shall be buried later."

Neither of the two survivors could refuse. With hearts quite full they were led aboard the airship.

It was an object of intense wonderment to them. For a time they were in fairyland.

"So this craft will really sail in the air?" exclaimed Raynham in sheer amazement. "I can hardly believe my senses. It seems as if I must be in some other sphere."

Everything was done for their comfort, and to palliate the grief of the young girl. Later in the day the funeral of Captain Clyde was held.

He was buried under the cliff beside others of his crew. Then a slab of soft stone was chiseled into a memorial of his sad fate.

After the affecting scene was over Frank called Raynham into the cabin and asked:

"What are your wishes, Mr. Raynham? We can take you back to civilization at once!"

Raynham was familiar with the object of the airship's visit to this part of the world. He could see that it would be a great detriment to the party to return now to civilization.

So he said:

"Mr. Reade, it matters not where we wander now. We have no home ties—all are broken. The world is our home. I wish you could take Ethel as a passenger and give me employment aboard the airship during the rest of this cruise."

There was an appealing accent in his voice which, aside from other considerations, Frank could not help but heed. After a few moments' thought the young inventor said:

"Then you have no home to go to?"

"No, sir!"

"Nor friends to await your return?"

"Our friends are dead!"

"In that case," said Frank, the cloud leaving his brow, "perhaps you would enjoy accompanying us for the rest of our journey. It will not be for long, and always, if we sight a ship I shall stand ready to place you aboard her, if you desire."

"Not much!" declared the young lover, vigorously. "We will go with you where you go, Mr. Reade, no matter where."

"Then it is settled," declared Frank, and rang the starting bell. In a moment the airship was under way.

Up into the Arctic sky it sprung, and soon the isle where the castaways for so long lived in hope deferred, was a speck in the distance.

The white latitudes now began to rapidly unfold before them, and the cold grew intense.

During their stay on the isle, Ethel Clyde had been enabled to make for herself some fur garments from the skins brought in by Raynham on his hunts, and these she found it best to wear.

The airship was now following the eightieth parallel of longitude toward the Pole. This would bring them across Cockburn Island and eventually into Lancaster Sound.

This would be very near North Pole territory. Everybody was eager and anxious to reach the Pole.

As the days went by and her pangs of grief were assuaged, Ethel began to pick up, and the change of living told heavily in her favor.

Harris Raynham did the same. The two lovers began to enjoy the situation and were happy.

They waxed much interested in the object of the cruise, and paced the deck at all hours, watching the curious ac-

tion of the sun and the planets. The latter were now nearly on a line with the horizon, for the Arctic day was near its close.

Day by day the airship cut down the distance to the open sea.

The phenomena witnessed would fill a volume. The wonderful northern lights or aurora were grand beyond description. At last the 90th degree of north latitude was reached and a wonderful scene was spread before the voyagers. They beheld the waters of the open polar sea.

The shores were remarkably free from ice, and the wind which blew from the water was temperate. All of which St. Onge claimed vindicated his theory that the contiguity of the North Pole was a warm climate and a fertile, undiscovered continent.

The question would have very soon been settled but for an incident and an accident.

Pomp was filling the storage jars when he noticed that the driving gear of the electric engine was cracked. Should this break while they were in mid-air the chances were excellent that all on board would be instantly killed.

Pomp instantly reported the matter to Frank Reade, Jr.

"That settles it for a two days' job," he declared. "We will descend upon that high cliff yonder, Barney. There is a job of work for us."

The airship accordingly descended upon the spot indicated by Frank. From this point the coast in either direction extended wild and irregular.

Frank at once began work upon the broken gear. As Barney and Pomp thus found time a drug upon their hands they requested leave of absence for a hunting trip.

Of course Frank granted it.

Delighted, the two jokers made quick preparations. They extended an invitation to St. Onge, but the savant declined.

He was intending to make a little geological exploration on his own account, and had no particular love for hunting. As for Harris Raynham he was all devotion to Miss Clyde, and consequently did not accept either.

Armed to the teeth Barney and Pomp left the airship and struck out across the ice-fields to the westward. They had not gone far when Barney clutched Pomp's arm.

"Whist, now, but I see a foiner white bear," he said.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEAR HUNT.

Instantly the coon came to a halt. His fear of bears was of the proverbial sort.

"Golly, yo' don' say," he exclaimed, with eyes as big as saucers. "Where yo' see him chile?"

"Just ferninst that big block av ice," declared Barney, pointing across the ice-field. "Yez will have to look sharp, fer shure he's about the color av the snow himsilf."

Pomp at that instant spied the bear. It was a monster of its species and seemed to be tearing away and rending at something beneath its feet.

This, at the distance looked like a young seal, as it undoubtedly was. For some moments the two hunters were undecided.

They were in quest of game, but now that they had found it, it seemed pretty big to tackle. Finally Pomp said:

"Wha' am yo' gwine to do, honey? Shall yo' tackle him?"

"Phwat do yez say, nagyur? Shure, I don't loike bears mesilf."

"I reckon Ah would rather hunt fo' 'possums any time," chattered the coon.

"Yez won't find thim in this part av the world," said Barney. "Well, here's at the reptile!"

With which he raised his rifle and fired. Either the dim light of the Arctic day or the whiteness of the intervening snow or perhaps shaking nerves, affected Barney's aim.

For the bullet went wide of its mark. It struck an ice pinnacle just beyond and brought it down with a crash.

The bear roared defiantly and stood upon its hind legs. It at once spotted the two hunters.

The Arctic bear is at times aggressive, and is no despicable foe at any time.

It at once set sail for the two jokers. Consternation was now their lot.

"Holy murther!" gasped Barney; "here cums the bloody baste! Phwaliver shall we do, nagyur?"

"Run fo' it!"

"Divil a bit!" declared the Celt stolidly. "Yez niver see an O'Shea run from the enemy yit. Bad cess to yez, take that!"

And Barney fired again at the bear. This time the bullet hit the mark. But it did not kill.

The bear emitted a yell of rage and pain and came lumbering across the ice full tilt.

"Splil, nagyur!" cried the Celt. "Yez go that way an' I'll go this! Give it to the omadhonn!"

By this time Pomp had partly recovered from his stage fright. He at once began to empty his rifle.

For a moment the bear was undecided which to pursue. Then he took for Pomp as the choicest morsel.

"Run, nagyur!" yelled Barney. "Shure, I'll have him from behoind now!"

And the Celt ran up to short range behind the bear and

poured in the bullets. This could not fail to have its effect.

The big brute, snarling with rage and pain, suddenly topped. One of the bullets had struck his vitals.

It was a lucky shot.

He reeled, stumbled and fell. A couple of more well-placed balls and his career was finished.

The two jokers had bagged their game, and big game it was, too. For a moment they were puffed up with pride like two big toads.

"Bejabbers, that's the foinest bear I iver saw, nagyur!" declared Barney; "it's bate the record we have!"

"Golly! he am de king-pin, an' no mistake," agreed the coon. "I done reckon Ah make me a big obercoat ob his hide. Jes' keep a man warm!"

"Phwat's that yez say? Shure, I've a little to say about that meself!"

"How am dar, sah?"

"Sure, it's more my bear thin it's yours, sor. Didn't I see him fust, an' didn't I be afther shootin' him?"

"Huh! I shoot him mahself, too. Den yo' neber wud hab got him if I habn' gib him a chance to chase me!"

"Yez are a big sthuff! Shure, av his skin goes to any wan, it's to me. An' av yez think y're any betther man than I am, now's the toime to thry it, sor!"

And Barney spat on his hands and made a bluff at hitting Pomp.

The darky was ready to pick up the gauntlet. He shook his head like a mad bull.

"Hi, hi, look out dar, chile!" he cried. "Yo' jes' git yo' mudder's monkey in a scrape if yo' don' look out!"

"Bejabbers, that's jes' what I want to do, sor."

"Yo' kin do it!"

"Yez bet I kin!"

And Barney made a bluff at the coon. This was enough to set the ball rolling.

Both were in capital trim for a ruction, and at it they went, tooth and nail.

Over and over they rolled in the snow, kicking, tugging and snorting in the most vigorous fashion.

It was hard to say which was getting the best of the argument, when the end came in an unexpected manner and with mutual demoralization.

As it chanced, they were not far from an air-hole, or breathing hole in the ice. This was lightly skimmed over and covered with snow.

It looked as solid as the rest of the ice. But it was not.

And as they rolled unwittingly upon it, there was a creaking and cracking and a groaning. Then crash! and splash!

Both went under the surface in the chill Arctic water. Only the immense depth of the ice saved their lives.

For had they drifted under the ice their fate would have been sealed instantly. As it was both came to the surface, floundering, splashing and gasping.

And the way they crawled out of that icy bath was a caution to monkeys. They were a sober pair as they once more stood on the firm ice, with the water dripping from them in a torrent.

"Golly!" sputtered Pomp, "I'se drefful cold. How am yo', Fish?"

"Br-r-ugh!" wheezed the Celt. "I'm n-nearly froze an'—begorra, I'm goin' back to the airship."

"I done fink we freeze if we don't," agreed Pomp.

They both looked at the bear. But it was out of the question to think of stopping for the skin now. Their lives depended upon getting back to the airship as quickly as possible.

Already their garments were icicles clinging to their bodies. Should the chill reach their vitals they would surely die.

So away they ran at full speed across the ice-field for the airship. They reached it and clambered aboard.

Rushing into the cabin they began hastily to disrobe. Frank regarded them with amazement.

"What on earth have you fellows been doing?" he asked, sternly.

Whereat Barney told the story of their adventures. The young inventor could not help a laugh.

"Well, hurry up and get dressed," he said. "I want you to assist me. Did you see St. Onge?"

"Divil a bit, sor!"

"Well, I am a bit worried about him. He left some while ago, and was to have returned before this. Some accident may have befallen him. If he does not return soon I want you to go out after him."

"All roight, sor."

The two jokers hastened away to their staterooms. They quickly reappeared with dry garments on.

Then they rendered Frank some aid below decks. All this while no word came from St. Onge.

The dinner hour passed and Frank became alarmed.

Raynham volunteered to go with Frank in quest of the missing man, and after some thought the young inventor said:

"Very well; it shall be you and I. Mr. Raynham, Barney and Pomp, keep your eyes open aboard ship now. No skylarking."

"All roight, sor."

"We'se gwine to, sah."

"I hope yon will not get lost," said Ethel, in a fearful voice.

"Have no fear," said Raynham, pressing her hand. "We shall return safely, and I hope with the missing man."

A few moments later Frank and Raynham left the airship's deck.

Frank knew that it would be of little use to look for St. Onge among the ice-packs. The savant would confine his research to the sandy beach, which was clear of ice and snow.

So they set out along the shore of the open Polar Sea. As they went they occasionally found footprints in the sand.

This constituted a sort of trail and they were progressing rapidly when suddenly Frank gave a sharp cry.

"What is the matter?" asked Harris.

"Look! That explains all!"

Frank pointed to the sand.

"Other footprints!" exclaimed Raynham in amazement.

"Yes!"

Sure enough, there were fully a score of other footprints in the sand. They followed those of St. Onge.

"Why!" exclaimed Raynham, in surprise. "I never dreamed of other human beings in this vicinity. Who can they be?"

"Esquimaux!" replied Frank.

"Ah!"

"We must hasten if we would save St. Onge. As I understand, the Esquimaux of this part of the world are very savage and hostile."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Raynham. "Then St. Onge is in deadly peril!"

"He is!"

Together the two men pressed forward. Each knew the fearful need of prompt action.

As they ran on the trail was broad and plain. Then they came upon a thrilling scene.

Blood was seen upon the sands. They were trampled and dug up as with a fierce struggle. And just under the cliff lay the dead body of a man.

For a moment the hearts of the two explorers were chilled. But a nearer view revived hope.

For the body was not that of St. Onge, as they had feared.

It was one of the Esquimaux, shot to the heart. It told a plain story.

The little French savant had made a brave stand. But that he had been eventually overpowered was certain.

Frank and Raynham followed the trail up the cliff. Here they came upon further discoveries.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESQUIMAUX.

For here they found the marks of the departure of the Esquimaux with their prisoner. There were footprints of dogs and sledges.

Frank and Raynham exchanged glances.

"This means plainly only one thing," said the young inventor; "they have taken St. Onge away with them."

"What will they do with him?"

"Heaven knows. Probably when they reach their village they will torture him to death. It is awful!"

"What shall we do?"

"Back to the airship!" cried Frank. "We have no time to lose if we would save his life."

Together they started back along the shore. They ran, stumbled, and sped on with all haste.

But suddenly they halted.

A startling sound reached their ears. It was a chorus of wild yells, and then the crack of rifles.

"What does that mean?" cried Raynham, aghast.

"It means that they have attacked the airship!" declared Frank.

"Heavens!" gasped Raynham. "What if they capture it?"

"Don't you be afraid of that," declared the young inventor. "Barney and Pomp know what they are doing. You will see!"

"But what are we to do?"

"We must proceed with great caution. The foe are apt to stumble upon us at any moment!"

"We would share the fate of St. Onge."

"Certainly!"

Frank now led the way cautiously along the shore until he had reached a point from whence they could see the airship. It was seen at once that his hypothesis was correct.

The scene was a thrilling one.

The airship was surrounded by an immense mob of Esquimaux, who were yelling and flinging their missiles aboard.

But Barney and Pomp with their Winchesters were keeping the foe at bay. They could not get to close quarters with that deadly storm of bullets in their face.

But now of a sudden the airship took an upward spring into the air.

"Good!" cried Frank. "I knew they would not fail."

"What does that mean?" asked Raynham. "Are they going off to leave us?"

"Not a bit of it!" declared Frank. "They are going to look for us. Ah! What did I tell you?"

The airship was now above them, and a signal flag over the rail showed that Barney had seen them.

The airship swooped down like a huge eagle. Frank and Raynham rushed forward and clambered over the rail just as she was about to touch the earth.

"Hurrah!" cried Frank. "You did just right, Barney. There was nothing to spare!"

"Shure, sor, I'm glad we wor in toime," cried the Celt. "Bad cess to the omadhouns! But wheriver is the Friuchman, sor?"

"He is in trouble," replied Frank. "Head the ship alongshore, Barney. We must go to his rescue."

"Thin the barbarians have got him, sor?"

"They have!"

Barney lost no time in getting the airship under way. Along the shore it sped, until the spot was reached where St. Onge had been captured.

Then the trail was taken.

Back over the ice-pack the Esquimaux, with dogs and sledges, could be seen in pursuit, but the aerial voyagers feared them but little.

The trail in the snow was plain enough, and the airship, at an elevation of a hundred feet, swept on.

Of course, at such a rate of speed, it was not at all difficult to eventually overhaul the Esquimaux captors.

The party was suddenly seen passing at full speed through a snowy depression. The dogs were going on the jump, and to one of the sledges St. Onge was seen to be bound.

"Forward," cried Frank. "Get in the bow with your rifle, Pomp, and pick off that Esquimaux driving St. Onge's sledge!"

"A'right, sah!"

Pomp at once rushed into the bow and obeyed orders. As the rifle cracked, the Esquimaux was seen to fall.

In an instant the dogs swerved, and St. Onge's sled left the line at right angles. The other Esquimaux turned also and several sledges were upset.

The moment the Arctic natives saw the airship swooping down upon them, however, superstitious fear got the better of them, and they fled.

The dogs attached to St. Onge's sledge had come to a

stop, being all tangled up in their harness. The next moment the airship alighted beside him.

"Hello, old pard!" shouted Frank, as he leaped over the rail. "Are you all right?"

"I am, monsieur; and, thanks to you, my life is saved!" cried St. Onge, with delight.

In a moment Frank had cut his bonds and he was upon his feet, unharmed. Back aboard the airship they went.

Up into the air it shot.

"Northward, Barney!" cried Frank. "We will now pay a visit to Monsieur St. Onge's Polar Continent."

"Which you must admit is no longer a myth," declared the Frenchman.

Away sped the airship, leaving the disgruntled Esquimaux to their own devices. Soon the waters of the Polar Sea were below and the white shore behind.

The interests of the voyagers were now all ahead.

Everybody scanned the horizon daily for a sign of that land which St. Onge was so sanguine was really in existence.

One fact speedily became apparent. As they progressed, the atmosphere grew less chill and moderated to such a degree that all were even obliged to take off their furs.

"Well, that is peculiar," admitted Frank, "everything tends your way, monsieur St. Onge!"

"Monsieur shall see," said the little Frenchman, suavely rubbing his hands. "Monsieur shall see."

Two days passed.

The tossing sea seemed to lose its raw, tempestuous look and the sky even grew less sombre. It was as if they were upon the threshold of another world, about to enter upon another planet.

It had now become so mild that all were enabled to don light garments. In fact, there was a balminess in the air almost worthy of the tropics.

All were astonished, save, perhaps, St. Onge.

"It is a remarkable phenomenon," declared Frank.

"It is not a phenomenon, monsieur," declared the Frenchman; "it is much more—it is a natural circumstance!"

The young inventor laughed at this logical definition. But despite this he had been doing some serious thinking.

"The Frenchman is not such a fool, after all," he muttered. "There may be more in his theory than any of us are willing to admit."

So all eyes were out for a sight of land. One day St. Onge pointed triumphantly toward the zenith.

"Do you see?" he cried. "I am right, am I not?"

Several huge birds were seen passing over the ship on soaring wings. They were gulls.

"We are near land!" exclaimed Frank. "That is not to be disputed. St. Onge, you are a latter-day Columbus!"

The savant was much pleased and now strutted the deck like a little peacock. An hour later, Barney, who was in the pilot-house, called to Frank:

"Shure, Misther Frank, will yez cum here a moment?"

"Certainly," agreed the young inventor. "What is it, Barney?"

"If yez will take that glass, sor, and look dand ahead will yez tell me phwat yez see!"

Frank complied at once.

He studied the horizon as Barney directed. Then he gave an exclamation.

"Smoke!" burst from his lips; "it is smoke!"

"Shure, an' phwat end it cum from, sor?" asked Barney.

"It looks like a column from the funnel of a steamer."

"Shure, phwat wud a steamer be doin' in these seas, sor?"

"It is impossible, of course," declared Frank. "And yet,—what can it be? Some distant fire—land—why, perhaps it is a volcano!"

"Pardon me, monsieur," said a voice at his elbow, "but will you allow me the glass?"

It was St. Onge.

"Certainly," replied Frank. "See what you can make of it."

And Frank handed it to him.

The little savant studied the horizon a moment attentively. Then he looked up at the sky and down at the sea. He consulted the barometer.

Then he said:

"I have to inform you, Monsieur Reade, that we will sight land in twenty minutes, at least. That distant white cloud is smoke from a volcano. That in itself is proof."

"Not altogether. The volcano might rise out of the sea!"

"Ah, but see the haze in the atmosphere, monsieur. It is right from the land. You will find it nowhere else!"

"I give up!" said Frank, with a sigh. "There is no doubt but that you are right, St. Onge."

"We shall see," declared the Frenchman positively.

At this moment, Raynham, who was at the rail with Ethel Clyde, called to Frank:

"Would you mind coming here a moment, Mr. Reade?"

"Certainly," replied Frank, and at once joined the couple. They appeared somewhat excited.

"Do you see an object out yonder on the water?" asked Raynham.

"I think it is an overturned boat," said Ethel.

Frank gave a violent start.

"It is nothing else!" he exclaimed. "Hi, there, Barney, turn the airship's course to the west! Steady!"

"All roight, sor."

The Aurora came about and drew nearer to the floating object. There was no doubt about it.

It was an overturned boat.

Astounded, the voyagers looked at each other. Here was mystery doubly intensified.

What did it mean?

It was believed that they were far from the radius of civilization or even access to the outer oceans. Yet here was proof of human habitation and occupancy of the region.

CHAPTER IX.

LAND HO!

When the airship was right over the floating craft Frank gave the order to descend.

Grappling hooks were thrown out and grasped the drifting boat. And as they raised it to the deck of the Aurora it was seen at once that the craft was not of an ordinary sort.

No civilized man was responsible for its construction.

There was no cut timber or bit of ironwork about it. It was, in short, a species of coracle, such as is made by barbarian hands, with bits of willow and wicker and strands of sealskin in lieu of nails.

There was keen disappointment.

"An Esquimaux boat!"

"A simple kayak!"

"That is all."

But St. Onge disputed this.

"That is not true," he declared. "In all fairness, monsieurs, did you ever see an Esquimaux kayak built like this?"

"Well," admitted Frank, "I never did."

"Nor I," agreed Raynham.

"Then it must have been made by other hand—very likely by the hands of a barbarian of wholly different type. The workmanship is different, the material is different. No Esquimaux could or would have made such a craft."

This argument was a convincing one.

"Well," said Harris Raynham, with a laugh, "of course we shall find the type of barbarian you speak of when we reach that Polar Continent."

St. Onge bowed.

"We shall!" he said, positively.

The boat lay on the deck, and it was suffered to remain there for the present. All now, with fresh interest, turned again to the rail.

"Indeed," said Ethel, with a woman's softness of heart, "I only hope we will find land, if only to please Mr. St. Onge, for his disappointment will be terrible if we do not."

"You are right," said her lover, with a laugh. "Well, it is not impossible."

The column of smoke from the distant volcano was growing larger every moment.

All eyes were upon it.

And not one of the voyagers was sorry when suddenly Barney gave a shout.

"Whurroo! Land ho!"

In a moment glasses were leveled at the sea line. There was no disputing the fact now.

Land was certainly in sight. The volcanic peak could be faintly seen.

Barney put on more speed, and every moment now the land grew rapidly nearer. It loomed up into a black and rugged coast line, extending east and west as far as the eye could reach.

St. Onge was wonderfully calm.

He received congratulations very politely, and remained constantly at the rail, studying the distant land.

Frank joined him.

"Well, St. Onge," he said, "you can find no fault with your luck."

"I am satisfied, monsieur."

"You are the true discoverer of the new continent, if continent it really is."

"There can be no doubt of it, Monsieur Reade. No island could have such a contour. Ah, it is really the Polar Continent!"

"If so——"

"We have mighty revelations in store for us. My fellows of the Academy of Sciences would give their heads to be here this moment!"

"I doubt it not," agreed Frank, "but the honor is yours."

"I deny that, monsieur. It belongs to you."

"To me?"

"Oui, monsieur. How could it have ever been discovered without your wonderful air-ship?"

"Ah, but you are the one who claimed the existence of the Polar Continent. Consequently you are the discoverer by all good rights."

But St. Onge would not admit this. He persisted in giving the honor to Frank. Whereat the young inventor laughed, and said:

"Before we quarrel over it, St. Onge, let us first see how great an honor it really is."

"That is wise, monsieur."

But there was little doubt but that the voyagers had discovered in truth the fabled land of the north, which figures so prominently in old Norse tradition and story.

It was claimed by early Norse historians that the keel of a Viking ship had cut the waters of this same sea, and that a colony was planted in a wonderful land, the like of which was not elsewhere on earth.

All the voyagers now began to look upon this legend as an historical fact. For truly here was the land.

Nearer the airship drew to the rugged shores. Soon it was easy to see something of the interior.

And it was a remarkable sight spread to view.

There were great passes and defiles among crags and peaks of black rock. Below them valleys of emerald green contrasted in color.

There were dashing streams and placid lakes. Rank vegetation and thousands of birds of varied plumage and unknown species.

A wonderland was unfolding itself to the aerial voyagers. It was certainly worth something to stand in their shoes at this thrilling moment.

"Well," declared Raynham, with a thrilling voice, "I should say this would pass for the original Garden of Eden."

"Indeed, you are right," agreed Frank. "I believe the climate is beyond anything I ever saw before!"

"It is indeed!" agreed St. Onge.

"Shall we be allowed to descend?" asked Ethel.

"Most certainly," replied Frank. "But first, we might do better to get an extended view from our elevation."

"Oh, of course."

And the view was certainly grand. The volcano which had been first seen so far out at sea was a mighty mountain peak far inland.

It was in active operation, and its distant thunders could be plainly heard. Indeed, there were others of lesser note in the distance.

"How do you explain this anomaly?" asked Frank of St. Onge. "How is it that a temperate climate can be found only so short a distance from the terrible cold of the north?"

frigid region on earth, and be shut from its influence only by this strip of sea, comparatively narrow?"

The savant had a ready answer.

"I think it is easy to comprehend," he said, "when you bear in mind the powerful volcanic forces here at work. The earth's crust is probably very thin hereabouts and thoroughly heated by inward fires. This tempers the waters of the sea and prevents the ice and snow from coming here. The heated volume of air from this volcanic continent is very powerful and sufficient to force back the cold which might otherwise come rushing in."

Frank was convinced.

"You have got it right, as I believe, St. Onge," he said. "You are an honor to your profession of scientists."

The airship had all this while been sailing inland. The farther they went from the sea the warmer the atmosphere became.

This was delightful, and the voyagers lounged on the deck, taking in the beautiful panorama spread below.

"Who knows," said Raynham, speculatively, "now that the Polar Continent is discovered, an Arctic railroad and steamboat line may be established and this region become a new republic on the lines of the United States?"

Ethel laughed merrily.

"I fear that will never be."

"And why not?" protested Raynham. "The insatiable white settler and explorer has penetrated to as inaccessible spots as this and built cities and made a nation. Just make a discovery of gold and see what power will keep them from rushing here."

"There is homely truth in that statement," agreed Frank Reade, Jr. "The people will flock to any part of the world in quest of gold."

"On my word," declared Raynham, "I've half a mind to found a colony here myself. What do you say if we make our perpetual home here, Ethel?"

But the young girl laughed.

"I think not," she said. "What could we do so far from Boston, New York or Chicago?"

"There would be no large stores for shopping," said Raynham, mischievously.

"Not that—but——"

"What?"

"We would be exiled from society."

"Pshaw! am I not society enough for you? Besides, in a short while there would be plenty of lady emigrants——"

"Oh, don't tease me that way! I mean society—real society, such as we have at home."

"Oh, I comprehend!" said Harris, with mock serious-

ness. "Five o'clock tea, evening hops or nights at the opera. Elegant chances to display fine toilettes, et cetera, et cetera!"

"Well, allow that!"

"The degenerate tendency of the modern female mind. What would have become of Plymouth Rock if all the pilgrim ladies had decided to stay in London, rather than incur the deprivations and denials of an heroic life in a new country?"

"There are plenty people gifted for such enterprises," argued Ethel.

"Oh, you are incorrigible!" declared Harris, with a laugh. "Well, it is settled. We will not become residents, even extempore, of the Polar Continent. We will leave that honor to people far better gifted."

At this Ethel ran away in a pout, not caring to conduct the subject further. Whereat Harris joined the men forward.

St. Onge had spied a curious geological formation which he was anxious to investigate. So Frank agreed to make a descent.

So far no sign of human population of the region had been seen, nor had any evidence of the existence of such been adduced.

But St. Onge would not relinquish one jot of his theory that it was inhabited. He was positive.

Barney lowered the airship and it rested upon the verge of a small tableland. The region about was wild and rocky and the soil auriferous.

With his geological outfit St. Onge leaped down from the deck of the airship. But he had not taken a dozen steps forward when he gave a sharp cry and pointed to a high section of the mountain wall just in front of them.

The voyagers looked thither and beheld a remarkable thing.

CHAPTER X.

THE DISC OF GOLD.

The object to which St. Onge had called their attention was indeed a remarkable piece of work.

There in the solid face of the cliff was cut the grinning outlines of a human skull. It was a perfect imitation, save for the presence of two horns jutting from the brow.

"Do you see?" cried St. Onge. "It is the work of human hands!"

Frank, Raynham and Barney had by this time joined the scientist. Pomp remained to guard the airship and Ethel.

Astounded, the voyagers gazed at the curious caricature. Then Raynham exclaimed:

"What on earth is it?"

"Probably an idol of some sort," replied the savant.

"No doubt," agreed Frank.

"But the horns?" pursued Raynham. "Do you imagine that these Arctic natives are so adorned?"

"The idol is not necessarily a likeness of any of the natives," said St. Onge. "Idols very seldom are. Let us go forward and examine it."

They crossed the intervening distance to the skull and now were able to realize what a monstrous structure it really was.

The height from the rudely carved chin to the summit of the brow was fully ten feet. The eyes were big cavities, and niches were cut in the idol as if they were intended for a ladder to climb up by.

Barney at once started to climb up the huge skull.

"Beggorra," he cried, "let's see phwat is up there."

"Go ahead, Barney," said Raynham; "I'll follow you."

The Celt soon reached the cavity above the horns.

It was large enough for him to stand upright in, and he shouted down to the others:

"Shure, it's a cave which goes into the rock; there's no tellin' how far. Will yez cum up?"

"Of course!" replied the trio.

Then they began to climb up.

Raynham went nimbly up, and St. Onge followed. Frank was the last. All now stood in the cavity of the idol's eye.

The cavity, as Barney had said, extended an unknown distance into the cliff. Neither did it seem to be an artificial passage, but a genuine cavern.

It was as dark as Erebus twenty feet from the entrance, but Frank overcame this. He had brought a pocket lantern with him, and this, lit by a small storage battery, was brilliant enough to make all quite plain for a wide radius about.

And as the explorers penetrated into the cavern they discovered many strange things. On the smooth rock walls curious characters were drawn and scenes engraved.

It would have required a lifetime to study these all out, so St. Onge contented himself with a superficial inspection only.

"What do you suppose this place was used for?" asked Raynham, in surprise. "Was it a dwelling or some sort of a temple of worship?"

"Undoubtedly the latter!" declared St. Onge; "but we will find some stronger clue yet."

The passage seemed to grow narrower as they went on, but it suddenly diverged and the explorers were given a great surprise. They came out into a high, arched chamber, with vaulted nave and circling gallery.

Here was seen the architectural work of human hands. The great pillars were polished like burnished metal.

At the far end of the chamber was a great disc upon the wall. It gleamed yellow and bright in the light of the electric lantern.

But dust was upon everything. Hundreds of bats flew shrieking out of the place. It was evident that this temple of worship had not been used for many years.

It was some while before any one could recover himself sufficiently to speak. Then Harris Raynham said:

"Surely, these were a most remarkable people. But they have either abandoned this temple or they have passed away entirely.

"True," cried Frank. "What is your theory, St. Onge?"

"They may have become extinct as a tribe," declared the scientist. "Certainly none of them are living here now."

"I have a curiosity to examine that disc," declared Raynham. "It looks to me like solid gold."

"So it does to me," agreed Frank.

So they descended into the amphitheater. As they approached the disc they saw that it was hammered into the rock wall, and it needed but a brief examination to reveal the thrilling truth.

It was really solid gold.

The huge mass was hammered into the circular niche in the wall, and upon its surface were engraved strange characters. The force of the discovery affected the explorers greatly.

"Jericho!" exclaimed Raynham, "there is gold enough to make us all immensely rich!"

"And it is the virgin stuff," declared St. Onge. "Nothing could be purer. We can confiscate it, as it has now no living owners."

"Which we will do," declared Frank, as he cut out a small specimen. "But first had we not better finish our exploring tour?"

"Certainly," agreed St. Onge, and Raynham did not demur.

So they continued to explore the amphitheater. There was plenty of evidence that this had once been a place of idolatrous worship.

But nothing more of importance was found and the voy-

agers entered a passage leading out of the amphitheater, and as they fancied, to some other temple chamber.

But this assumption was not verified. The passage really brought them out into the open air and upon shelf of rock, from which a mighty view of a great valley could be had.

This was on the other side of the mountain wall from the airship.

"Curious!" exclaimed Frank. "I did not notice that valley when we descended in the airship."

"Nor I," declared St. Onge. "But look! there is more evidence of human occupancy of this region!"

Full five miles below in the valley were the ruins of a city. It was upon the shore of a beautiful lake. No sign of life was about it.

But the crumbled walls and paved streets could be plainly descried. Once people had lived and thrived there.

But what had become of them?

Had they decamped of their own accord, or had an enemy massacred them, or a pestilence worked their extermination?

This was a problem and a mystery. There seemed no ready means of solution.

For a moment the explorers thought of descending and exploring the ruined city.

But Frank, on second thought, was constrained to say:

"It will not pay. We had better return to the airship and pay a visit there with her!"

"But the gold disc!" asked Raynham.

"It will be safe where it is. We can return for it at any time."

So it was decided.

They made their way back the way they had come. Once aboard the airship Frank touched the lever and sent the Aurora aloft.

Over the mountain wall she sailed and down toward the ruined city. But before she could descend again a startling thing occurred.

A distant roaring sound was heard. All looked up the valley. And as they did so not one in the party but turned pale.

It was a startling sight which they witnessed. Down the cleft between the hills a great yellow cloud was plunging.

It was a species of hurricane probably peculiar to that region. If it should strike the airship it might mean destruction.

For one swift instant the voyagers gazed, while every man felt his hair fairly rise.

Then Frank cried:

"Into the cabin with you, every one! Work lively or all is lost!"

And into the cabin they went. Frank sprung to the keyboard. He threw the rotascope lever wide open. Up shot the airship like an arrow.

Frank saw but one chance. This was to rise so far above the storm that its influence could not be felt.

A minute's warning would have enabled him to do this. But the hurricane traveled in seconds. Before it could reach the upper stratum the airship was caught by the blast.

To describe what followed is most difficult. To the voyagers it was a wild, incongruous dream.

The airship was caught up like a ball of cotton and whirled and tossed through space with the utmost ease. It was impossible to get out of that giant clutch.

The horror of that experience was never forgotten by the voyagers. They were thrown about the cabin violently and suffered fearful bruises.

How long they were in the grip of the hurricane they never knew. But when it ceased and the airship grew steady all crept to the windows. It was a startling scene which they beheld.

Only tossing waters were visible. The land of the Polar Continent had vanished as if by magic.

"Where are we?" gasped Raynham.

"Shure, we're out to say ag'in!" cried Barney.

This was the undeniable truth. They were out over the Polar Sea. How far they were from the Polar Continent it was not easy to say.

But Frank went into the pilot-house and consulted the keyboard. The airship had suffered a fearful wrenching. The rotascopes were somewhat damaged, but yet the airship seemed as buoyant as ever.

Frank set the course back to the Polar Continent. St. Onge was quickly by his side.

"We are going back, Monsieur Reade?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Frank.

"That is good!"

The airship sped away once more to the northward, or as well in that direction as Frank could guess, for in these latitudes the compass had refused to act. But after weary hours of sailing no land again came into sight.

CHAPTER XI.

IN QUEST OF THE CONTINENT.

Frank was surprised.

"We must have been carried a good way in that hurricane," he declared. "We have already traveled fifty miles."

All kept watch for the Polar Continent. But the day passed and it did not come into sight.

All that night and the next day the airship sailed on. Then Frank first became conscious that something was wrong.

He called all the others into the pilot-house and explained the situation.

"Try as hard as I can," he declared, "I cannot get away from this open sea. We cannot have been sailing in a circle."

"Then where are we?" asked Raynham.

St. Onge had listened quietly. Then he said:

"My friends, we shall never see the Polar Continent again."

Astonished, the others turned upon him. Raynham exclaimed:

"What do you mean?"

"You heard me!"

"What reason have you for thinking that?" asked Frank.

"We are lost!"

"That is true, but we are in hopes to find the continent just the same."

St. Onge shook his head.

"It will be a chance in a hundred," he said, "That chance is against us!"

Frank went into the cabin and did some studying. When he came out a short while later he changed the course of the airship.

"I believe this will take us to the continent," he said, confidently. "We should make it in a few hours if at all."

But six hours passed, and still only the mighty expanse of waters were to be seen on all sides.

This was growing monotonous.

There was no sun by which to take a reckoning, and no certain way to find out where they were. It was as if they were lost in a great void of space and tossing waters.

Days passed and yet there was no sign of land. Frank calculated that the airship had sailed fully a thousand miles.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaimed: "we ought to be getting somewhere soon. As it is we are—well, nowhere."

St. Onge had grown strangely silent and moody. He seemed to shun the rest of the party and spent much of his time in the cabin.

The meaning of this was not clear. Here was another mystery, and the sequel was the one tragic event of the expedition.

"I tell you," said Raynham, one day, "something has come over St. Onge. He is not all there."

"Eh?" exclaimed Frank in surprise. "What makes you think so?"

"His strange actions."

"What have you noted?"

"His stateroom is next to mine. He scarcely sleeps at all nights, but walks his floor and talks and mutters strangely. He is either ill or unbalanced mentally."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Frank in surprise, "that cannot be. He is probably working on some abstruse problem. He will be all right in a short while, have no fear."

So the matter was dropped.

But the next evening St. Onge announced in a suave and logical manner at the dinner table that he had solved the mystery of their locality.

"I can explain it all to you!" he said. "Come to the cabin after dinner and I will explain it!"

"So?" exclaimed Frank, flashing a comprehensive glance at Raynham: "that is what you have been so assiduously studying for some days past?"

"Yes, Monsieur Reade!" replied St. Onge: "that is true, and I have solved the whole problem!"

Of course, all were on the qui vive.

"That is joyful news, and entitles you to great credit, Monsieur St. Onge," declared Raynham. "We will all be on hand to listen."

St. Onge then fell into merry conversation, and in short, for the rest of the dinner hour, was the life of the party.

After the meal was over he repaired to his stateroom to procure his data, as he said. Frank turned to Raynham and said:

"You see it all now. These scientists are peculiar men, you know?"

"I see!" replied Raynham.

In a short while St. Onge reappeared and placed on the cabin table a heap of curious looking drawings. Then he addressed the others, even Barney and Pomp being present.

"My friends," he said, in his urbane way, "I have given much study and earnest thought to the question of our whereabouts. I have noted meteorological, physiological and other conditions, and have to announce that we are no longer upon the planet called the Earth."

The savant paused. For a moment a pin could have been heard to drop in the cabin.

All stared at the scientist. At first every one was ready to believe that he was joking. But the next moment this was dispelled and it was seen that he was much in earnest.

Had a bombshell dropped in their midst the party could

not have sat more aghast. Frank's gaze involuntarily met Raynham's.

Then the young inventor arose and went to the table. He feigned to be studying the charts and all the while his keen eye was upon the savant.

"This is a remarkable discovery you have made, St. Onge," he said. "We are no longer on the Earth, then? If so, where are we?"

The scientist's eyes flashed in a fitful way, and he launched into an excited description of their transposition by means of electric currents to the planet Mars, all of which was due to the hurricane.

St. Onge was allowed to fortify his tale the best he could. And finally, in deep satisfaction, he finished and went back to his stateroom to find, as he declared, a method of transposition back to the earth.

When he had gone, silently the listeners repaired to the deck. Ethel Clyde was almost hysterical. Barney and Pomp went wondering about their duties.

But Raynham said to Frank:

"What did I tell you?"

"He is gone sheer raving mad!" declared the young inventor. "Poor fellow! What could have done this thing?"

"What shall we do? Are we not in danger with a maniac aboard?"

"Undoubtedly!" agreed Frank. "But I think he is harmless. We had better let him have his own way until we reach home. Then we will turn him over to his friends."

A few moments later St. Onge appeared on deck.

He chatted volubly and seemed as sane as any of the others. What had brought this awful malady upon him?

Frank concluded that it was the effect of a discovery which he had long affirmed, and the realization of his pet dream had been too great a shock. The exciting incidents of the aerial cruise had told upon a mind and system long weakened with nervous strain and mental overwork.

It was not at all difficult to account for from this standpoint. But Frank believed the form of mania a harmless one.

The tragic part of the incident was yet to transpire.

Suddenly Barney, from the pilot-house, gave a great shout.

"Och, hone, Misther Frank," he cried, "wud yez come here? Shure, it's the ind av the say, I believe!"

In a moment Frank was in the pilot-house. Barney pointed to the horizon.

And the spectacle witnessed by the young inventor was a remarkable one. All along the horizon line was a white ridge, undoubtedly snow and ice.

Astonished, the young inventor gazed upon the distant icefield.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "we have come to the verge of the open Polar Sea again and the ice region. We have been sailing away from the Polar Continent all the while!"

"Shure, it looks that way," declared the Celt.

"Then we have simply retraced our steps, or perhaps we are in some other corner of the Arctic. Well," cried Frank, triumphantly. "we shall be able to get our bearings afresh, anyway, and make sure of a return to the Polar Continent."

By this time the others had crowded into the pilot-house.

St. Onge seemed the most excited of any. Indeed, he rapidly grew violent.

"I tell you, it is a hoax?" he cried. "Don't let the devils deceive you! They have tried all night to make me believe it with their red-hot irons and their stings, but it is a lie! We are on the planet Mars, and we can never get back to the earth until we find the right current!"

With which the maniac picked up a hammer and made a savage blow at the binnacle post. It glanced from the metal cap, and before he could strike again Frank motioned to Barney.

They seized the madman by the shoulders.

Frank saw at once that desperate measures must be resorted to. The lives of all were at stake.

"Easy, St. Onge," he said. "Let us have a talk. Come into the cabin."

"Unhand me, ye fiends!" yelled the maniac. "Curses on ye! I am the ruler of this planet and I want your blood! I will have it!"

Barney was a powerful fellow, but in that moment he was no match for the mad scientist. The struggle which followed was fierce and sanguine.

Just as they fancied they had the unfortunate man overpowered, he made a desperate effort and wrenched himself from their grasp.

With a mocking laugh he sprang to the pilot-house door and across the deck.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he shrieked. "You thought you had me in your power! But I defy you! I am immortal and can not die! I go to visit the nymphs of the sea and revel in the joys of Neptune! Farewell!"

"My soul!" cried Frank; "stop him! grab him, somebody!"

Too late!

Even while the maniac's harsh, terrible laugh was ringing upon the Arctic air, he had consummated his own destruction.

over the rail he went with a mad plunge. Before the eddy could reach the rail he had vanished in the cold, yeasty sea.

"Down with the airship!" cried Frank. "We must save him if we can!"

Barney was quick to obey the command. The *Aurora* settled down to the water's surface.

But the unfortunate man did not rise to the surface. He was never seen again. It was his end.

For some while the airship hovered over the spot. When it was evident that human effort was of no further avail, however, the *Aurora* slowly arose and continued on her journey.

While the termination of the madman's life was perhaps the best thing for him and all parties concerned, there rested over the party a pall of gloom.

While in his right mind St. Onge had been an agreeable and pleasant companion. His fate was sad, indeed.

"It will be a blow to his fellow-members of the French Academy," declared Frank; "it is very sad."

The airship sailed on slowly toward the icefields. Frank had retired to his stateroom to make an entry of the day's sad events in his log-book, when there came a tap on the door.

It opened and Raynham entered.

His face was ghastly white.

"Mr. Reade," he said, "death hangs over us. I believe we are fated never to see home and friends again!"

Frank was astonished.

"Mercy on us, Raynham," he exclaimed. "You are not going daft, too! Brace up, my good fellow!"

But Raynham would not listen to words of cheer.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST IN THE ICE—THE END.

"There is a great calamity impending over us!" he said.

"Why do you think that?" asked Frank.

"I cannot tell you!" replied the young sailor, "but I never had this feeling, this strange premonition, that something terrible did not happen!"

"But it has happened. It is St. Onge's fate which has affected you!"

Raynham shook his head.

"No!" he said; "the calamity is to come. Nothing will avert it!"

Frank poured out a glass of wine.

"Take this to quiet your nerve," he said. But Raynham refused. He was in a state of profound melancholia.

"Dear me!" said Frank, in dismay. "I don't see what I am going to do with you. Is this all the effect of climate?"

"Pardon me," said the young sailor, rising. "I have no right to burden you with my apprehensions."

"They will not burden you long," said Frank, cheerily; "we shall strike better luck before long!"

Raynham went out on deck. In a few moments a gentle tap was heard on the door. In surprise Frank said:

"Come in!"

It opened and Ethel Clyde, pale and distraught, stood on the threshold. For a moment she hesitated.

"Miss Clyde," said Frank, "have a chair. You look ill. What can I do for you?"

"Ah, Mr. Reade, I don't know what makes me feel so queer!" exclaimed the young girl, "but I have a presentiment that something is going to happen!"

Frank was astounded.

"Mercy on us!" he exclaimed: "what has struck the ship? Have you got the complaint, also?"

"I—I wish we could sail for home," almost pleaded Ethel. "Really, I do not think we will ever find that Polar Continent again!"

"Miss Clyde," said Frank, trying to keep a straight face, "have you caught this hypochondria from Mr. Raynham?"

"Mr. Raynham?" exclaimed the young girl. "Why, is he so affected, then? He has shown nothing but a cheerful front to me."

Frank saw that she spoke the truth. He was puzzled, as well as surprised. In that moment a revulsion came over him.

After all, the Arctic trip had been a success, and St. Onge's theories had been proven correct. What necessity was there for a present return to the Polar Continent?

Something like a shade of homesickness came over Frank himself. It never took him long to make up his mind.

"Miss Clyde," he said, "I sympathize with you. Your sojourn in the Arctic has been associated with nothing pleasant. You have come here to ask me to head the airship homeward?"

"Yes," she replied, simply.

"It shall be done."

"Oh, Heaven bless you!"

She arose and flitted from the room. Frank's hand was upon the bell to call either Barney or Pomp, when hurried foot-steps came to the door. It was opened and Barney stood there, pale as ashes.

"Och, Mither Frank," he cried, "there's a breakdown in the machinery. Will yez cum, quick?"

"A breakdown?" exclaimed Frank. "Where is it?"

"In the engine room, sor."

Instinctively the young inventor thought of the warning of young Raynham. But he hastened to the engine room.

Barney's words were true.

The machinery had broken down, and it was with difficulty that the rotascopes could be kept moving. A glance told Frank an appalling fact.

The break was such as could not be repaired—at least, outside of the machine works. It was the result of wear and tear, and sections of the worn-out machinery needed replacing.

This, of course, was out of the question. For a moment a great wave of horror settled down over Frank's soul.

With pale face he turned to Barney.

"How far are we from the icefields?" he asked.

"About two miles, sor."

"Go back to the pilot-house and make the nearest course for them. Do all you can to keep the rotascopes moving."

The Celt vanished.

Then Frank went to work to bolster up the machinery, but he saw it was of no use. Then he went quickly on deck.

A startling state of affairs met his gaze. The airship was not one hundred feet from the surface of the sea, and still sinking. In a few moments she must take a watery plunge.

The icefields were yet quite a ways off. No immediate harm could come from striking the sea, for the airship was staunch. But the waves were heavy, and she was not built with an eye to resisting their force for a great length of time.

Raynham and Ethel stood by the rail, pallid but brave. Frank did not address them, but for a moment studied the situation.

Then he saw that the likely result of the airship's floating on the sea would be that she would ultimately drift upon the icefloes, as wind and wave were that way.

Upon the icefloes—what? He had no means of knowing how far they were from any civilized part of the world.

How were they to reach civilization, or even a warmer clime? They would have no means of travel but their limbs, and in the Arctic wilds it would take a lifetime to work their way out afoot, especially with a lady in the party. The outlook was a dreary one.

For once in his life Frank Reade, Jr., felt almost hopeless. The task before him was one of gigantic proportions.

Then his grit and indomitable will asserted itself. He went into the pilot house and tried to stimulate the dying rotascope with fresh action.

It was useless.

The next moment the airship was pitching and tossing upon the rough and choppy sea.

Several times she seemed likely to swamp before reaching the icefloe, but finally the wind and tide carried her into a little sheltered bay.

Here she began to grind upon the ice. Frank leaped out upon the floe with a rope. Barney and Pomp followed him.

So light was the Aurora that, with their united efforts, they were able to pull her out upon the ice. She rested there high and dry.

For two days the adventurers remained aboard the airship, planning a course of action. An impromptu sledge was rigged with long ropes, and upon this was placed a seat, enclosed in warm furs, for Ethel. The four men were to drag her over the icefields, for she could not hope to walk.

Behind this sledge was devised another, upon which were camp utensils and stores and ammunition. There was hope of finding game by the way.

Of course, it was necessary to desert the airship, and also leave behind many valuable things. But the question now was one of life or death, and was paramount to all others.

When thoroughly equipped leave was taken, not without some emotion, of the airship. Then the party started on its weary and uncertain journey.

Frank had calculated that the ice pack was in the upper part of Ballin Bay, and that by following its verge he might eventually work down into Greenland and find a Danish settlement.

How he was mistaken we shall very soon see.

Day after day they plodded on over the icefield, keeping the sea always upon their right. At night they camped under some ice-heap, with their furs and blankets for sole protection. Fortunately no wolves struck their scent.

Days passed into weeks. It was a horrible uncertainty they were laboring under.

And one day they sighted a mighty black headland far out to the southeast. Frank studied it for some while.

"It is probably a part of Greenland," he declared. "We will strike the coast and follow it down."

Hope revived. They struggled on for two days. The distance across the ice was enormous.

The headland seemed as far off as ever. Would they ever reach it?

Despair came once again. After all, when it was reached they had gained but a jot on their awful journey. Could they ever hope to traverse that long Greenland coast?

It seemed a mighty undertaking. They were growing weak, and Pomp had a severe illness which caused delay.

The stores were getting low and game seemed to have vanished entirely. The inevitable end seemed to be looming up. Indeed, they had begun to feel a stoical resignation to death.

Thus matters were, when one day the party was toiling through a little defile among the icecakes. Just ahead was a high barrier of ice.

This was fully fifty feet high, but Barney, looking up, caught an astounding sight. For a moment the Celt seemed in danger of losing his senses.

"What is the matter, Barney?" asked Frank, rushing to his side.

"Shure, sor, wud yez look?"

All eyes were turned in the direction indicated. A sensation was the result.

For there above the ice wall floated a flag upon a tall spar. It was the mainmast of a ship. In a moment the explorers were half mad.

Leaving everything they rushed forward. It involved a little detour, but they managed to round the upper end of the ice wall. There before their eyes, rocking a little in a fiord among the ice, was a full-rigged ship.

She had hoisted to her masthead the Norwegian flag. Upon her decks hardy sailors were seen, and a boat was visible upon the icefloes not half a mile away.

"Saved! saved!" cried Raynham, wildly. In the delirium of the moment the castaways embraced each other.

It was a joyful moment.

The brig Brinhilda was in these waters after seals. Captain Jarl Starleson welcomed the castaways aboard with true Norwegian hospitality.

One of the first questions Frank asked on coming aboard was:

"What great headland is that yonder?"

Captain Starleson looked surprised. He replied, in Norwegian:

"That is the North Cape!"

"The North Cape?" ejaculated Frank. "Where are we?"

"In the Arctic Ocean, sir, not far from the coast of Norway!"

"Well," exclaimed the young inventor, "I was never more turned about in my life. But I can see all now. We came clear across the Arctic in the airship, and if the machinery had not given out, would have landed in Nova Zembla!"

This was true enough. Surely the voyagers had been badly off their reckoning.

But the end of their troubles had been reached. They were obliged to remain a month on board the Brinhilda.

Then Captain Starleson gave up his seal quest and turned his ship's prow homeward. After a long sail down the stormy Norway coast they finally reached Christiansand.

Here an English ship took them to Southampton, and thence they sailed for New York.

The great trip to white latitudes was ended.

In a large measure it had been a success. The tragedy of St. Onge was the principal calamity.

His friends in New York took measures of sympathy, and a monument was erected to his memory, while all the scientific societies passed measures of regret.

This was all that could be done. It was a sad ending of a gifted life.

But now that the voyagers were safely at home, and could look back upon the visit to the Polar Continent, there was

some regret that they had not been able to carry their explorations further.

"Indeed!" said Raynham, with flashing eyes, "I should like to go back there and recover that disc of gold. It was worth a fortune!"

"Never mind," said Frank Reade, Jr., quietly, "the Aurora is not the last airship I shall build nor this the last voyage I will take to the North Pole."

In due course of time Harris Raynham and Ethel Clyde were married. Frank Reade, Jr., had the honor of giving the bride away.

Frank, with Barney and Pomp, returned to Readestown. It was many a long day ere they forgot the vivid and thrilling incidents of that memorable voyage by airship to the unexplored part of the world known as the "white latitudes."

THE END.

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